

# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

JUNE 1985

ONE DOLLAR



# VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

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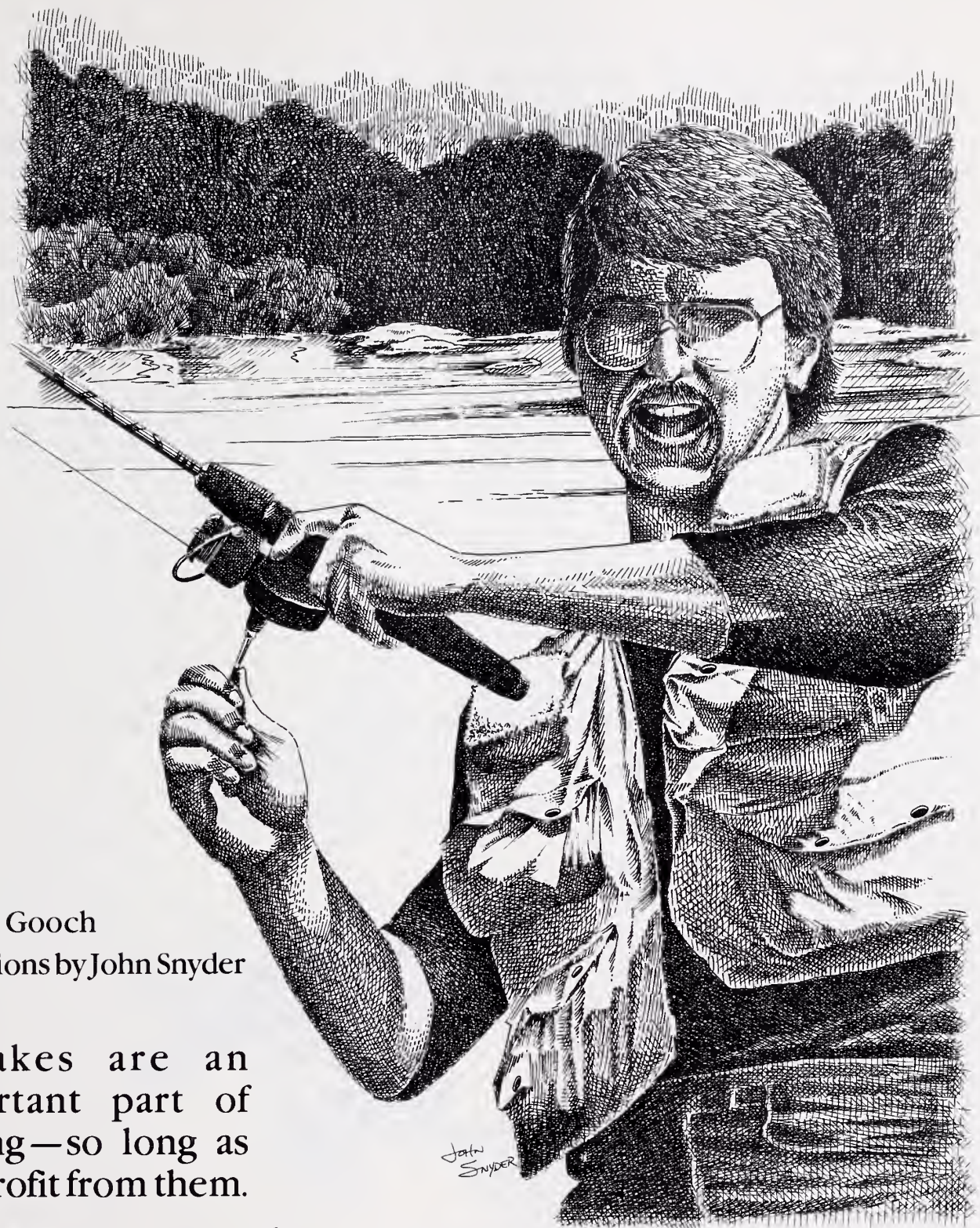
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The back cover: photograph by Shirley Whitenack, Newport News.





by Bob Gooch  
illustrations by John Snyder

Mistakes are an important part of angling—so long as you profit from them.

# *Mistakes* That Have Cost Me Fish



## *"A four-pound sucker and it broke his line!" yelled someone behind me.*

It's February as I write this. And it's raining, a steady patter on the roof that tells me there'll be no outdoor activity today. Furthermore the weatherman has warned that it could turn to snow by noon, and that would be even more disastrous. Quail hunting would be ended temporarily and there are just a couple of weeks left in this fleeting season.

It's a good time for reflection—on hunting seasons past, but even better on fishing seasons. The new trout season is less than two months away and already bass, pickerel, and other popular species are there for a break in the weather. The rain, and possibly the snow, are temporary problems.

Reflection quickly takes me back on a nostalgic journey through many fishing seasons, good ones and some not so good, fishing in Virginia and other states, and all kinds of experiences that seem to linger in memory forever. And that brings up the title of this story, *Mistakes That Have Cost Me Fish*. It's already there in bold green letters on my word processor.

Reflection brings up a variety of memories on the mental screen. The big fish are conspicuously there, the big rainbow trout from the Tye River, the lunker chain pickerel from a local lake, my only muskie, a couple of scrappy smallmouths from the James River, and so on. Anglers never forget the big fish in their lives. Nor do they forget the good ones that got away. Those elusive fish get bigger with every passing fishing season.

And that brings us, finally to the subject the editor and I agreed upon.

Every angler has lost some good fish over the years, and most of us will lose some more. It's part of the game. A good fish is never yours until it's in the net. Were it otherwise fishing would not be the grand American sport that it is. The experienced angler, however, knows how to keep his losses to a minimum.

Lost fish can generally be traced to one of three rather broad categories of causes: improper tackle, errors in striking or setting the hook, and mistakes in playing the fish. And I've made them all.

Let's look at tackle first.

"A four-pound sucker and it broke his line!" yelled someone behind me, an angler looking over my shoulder.

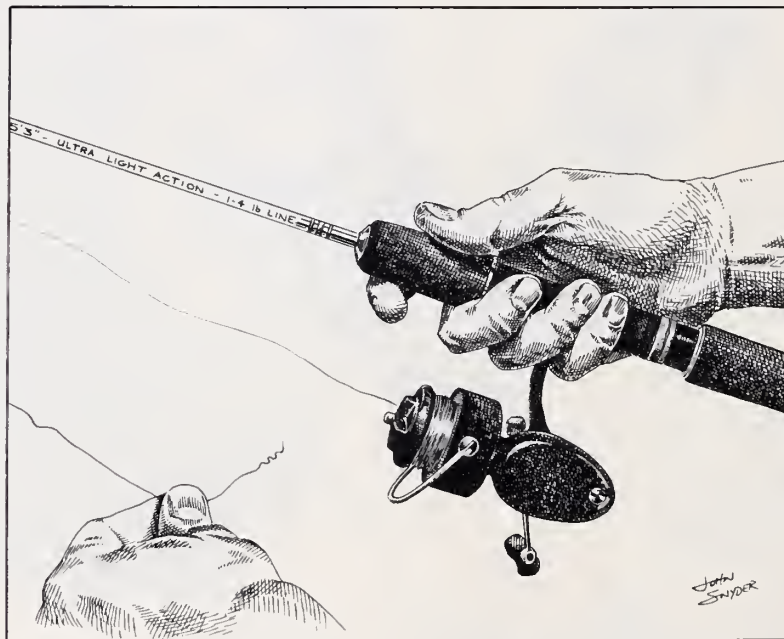
That little scenario was played a good fifteen years ago on the Hughes River. It was opening day of trout season, one of the few times I use bait because there simply isn't room to work artificials effectively. I was fishing spinning tackle and rolling a worm-baited hook down a riffle when the big sucker took the bait. I set the hook sharply, the big fish rolled on the surface—and my two-pound test line snapped. I had an audience, including the vocal angler

behind me. Every angler has a audience on the opening day of trout season. Your wins and losses never go undetected.

Now I wasn't particularly interested in landing a sucker, though I've never caught a four pounder. I suppose that fish weighed four pounds. It was the other angler's assessment, not mine. I bought his opinion, however, and have stored it in my memory. I lost a four-pound sucker in the Hughes River!

My mistake that cold April afternoon was fishing with a two-pound test line. I got hooked on ultralight spinning tackle when it first hit the market, and I still love it.

I have since seasoned its use with common sense, however, and now seldom drop below a four-pound test line. About the only exception comes when I am fishing high elevation native brook trout streams where even a 12-inch brookie is a lunker. Lines of two- or three-pound test are entirely adequate there and they offer an advantage in the gin-clear water where the trout are naturally spooky.



*"Sharp hooks can do wonders. Most hooks, particularly those on artificial lures, need a bit of sharpening when they come out of a tackle shop."*

**I**t's well to keep in mind that knots reduce the strength of your line, and a two-pound test line might be actually closer to one-pound test.

Had I been fishing four-pound test line that cold April afternoon on Hughes River, I would probably have landed that big sucker. It might have weighed only 2-pounds, however, and the fond memory I now carry with me would have never been formed! There was really no need for so light a line in the roily April waters, and while I did not risk the loss of the average stocked trout, there were probably some big brooder trout in the stream, not to mention the possibility of a good smallmouth bass moving up the stream from the Rappahannock River system into which the Hughes River eventually flows.

I lost other fish in my brief affair with two-pound test line, including a nice chain pickerel that continued to fin the clear waters of Mechunk Creek with my little plug draped from the corner of his mouth. I watched it for awhile, but there was no way that fish was going to hit another lure that day, and I hope it eventually rubbed my lure free.

Possibly the largest fish I have lost on too-light line was a big coho salmon that smacked my lure in a small Alaskan stream within a hundred yards of where it flowed into the icy waters of Prince William Sound. That was my first exposure to the big Pacific salmon, and the loss came hard—until another good fish a few moments later helped erase it. Before then, however, I had switched to a spare rod and a heavier line. That broken line (I believe it was 6-pound test) did leave me with the memory of a 10-pound salmon rolling on the surface of the racing Alaska stream. The 10 pounds in my assessment, but who can dispute it?

**D**espite these losses of good fish I still lean toward light lines, but not so light as to be impractical. The lightest line possible will increase your chances, improving your casting range and being less conspicuous to wary fish. It's a delicate balance the successful angler will strike.

Maybe it's laziness or possibly a habit formed in childhood while learning to fish with natural baits, but many anglers do not strike or set the hook hard enough. It's a habit I've wrestled with.

"You got either a big cat or a walleye!" yelled Ken Orr as my rod bent under the weight of a good fish. "Don't lose it."

But even before the words had left his mouth the tip of my rod snapped upward and the fish was gone.

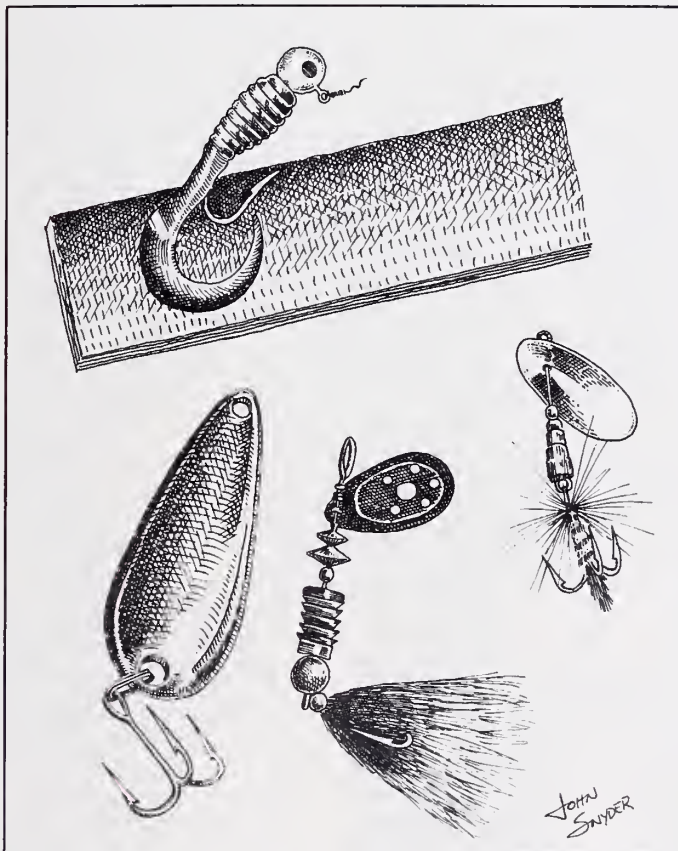
"You shouldn't have said that," I admonished.

We were fishing Fontana Lake high in the great Smoky Mountains that bright May day, and Kent, a local guide and angler, was way ahead of me. That big fish had been my chance to catch up—or even ease ahead of him.

What happened? There were several possibilities. We were fishing doll flies, and possibly the hook was not sharp enough to drive securely into the fish's mouth. That takes us back to tackle mistakes, but I believe I simply failed to strike sharply enough, to set the hook securely. Fish often hook

themselves, and I tend to rely upon that. My very first artificial lures as a youngster were surface plugs, and when a hungry bass hit them on the surface of a local pond, they did so with such vigor that setting the hook was never necessary. That's still true, but usually on surface lures only, and it doesn't hurt to use a little arm muscle then.

I've seen professional bass anglers strike so hard that they snatch a small bass clear of the water and bring it





skimming across the surface. Professional bass anglers are a breed of their own, however, and I don't recommend such a vigorous approach for most anglers. For one thing, few anglers fish with the 15- to 20- pound test line most professionals use.

Setting the hooks should be more than a sharp flick of the wrist once advocated by some fishing writers, particularly if the fish down there in the dark waters could be a big one—and usually you don't know. Getting the arm into the action is the answer. For anglers who did it wrong for a number of years, this requires concentration.

"That fish could have gone six pounds," moaned Orr—and that figure went into my memory bank.

A number of things can prevent the angler from setting his hook firmly. The rod may be too flexible or willowy for the job assigned to it, the line may have a wide bow in it or there may be too much elasticity in the line. This is the major problem with the modern monofilament line.

I am constantly torn between a rod tip that is flexible enough to allow me the thrills of fighting a good fish and one that is stiff enough to set the hooks. Again you have a delicate balance to strike. While a stiff rod is best for driving home the hooks, a flexible one is best for fighting a good fish. The flexible rod protects a light line and eventually tires the fish for the net.

"Next time point your rod tip directly toward the lure," advised Tom Thaxton, a native of South Boston now guiding anglers on the famous Santee-Cooper Lakes in South Carolina. I had made a long cast to some surface disturbance, but a stiff wind was blowing across the big lakes, and even before my line hit the water it had a good bow in it. A good bass grabbed my lure as it hit the water, but the combination of the bow in my line, a reasonably flexible casting rod, and the natural elasticity in my monofilament line meant I had no chance whatsoever to set the hook in that bass's tough mouth.

Pointing the rod directly at the lure would not eliminate all of my problems, but it would take care of the flexible rod. Keeping the bow out of a line on a windy day can be a problem, but reverting to a side cast which keeps the lure and line close to the surface of the water will help. Eliminate the flexible rod tip and the bow in the line, and the average angler can handle the natural stretch in his monofilament line. And there is less of a problem in short casts than in long ones.

Even resorting to fishing methods such as slipping can prove helpful.

Sharp hooks can do wonders. Most hooks, particularly those on artificial lures, need a bit of sharpening when they come out of a tackle shop. A tiny file, available at most tackle shops, will keep your hooks sharp.

A quick reaction when the fish strikes, and some arm muscle when you drive the hook home, however, is the real answer to avoiding the loss of good fish at this angling stage.

Playing a fish correctly is another area in which many anglers lose control. Like failing to maintain a tight line, or having the reel drag set incorrectly.

Yes, I've goofed there also.

I was headed to a good bass lake early one spring morning when my route took me across a good woodlands stream. The water beneath the little bridge was quiet and clear—and it looked fishy. The pickerel fisherman in me came alive, and for a moment the bass could wait. I just know a good chain lurked in the shadow of that bridge.

And it did!

My first cast was a little off and the lure banged against the bridge abutment—and then dropped gently on the surface. I flicked my rod tip, the surface lure fluttered, and that was it. The big pickerel kicked spray a yard high when it hit. Astonished by the suddenness of the strike, I watched for a moment with mouth agape. Too long, in fact. The fish came out of the water, head shaking, and seemed to hang there just long enough for me to identify it. Just time for an on-the-spot assessment. Five pounds—so says my memory bank. I gave the fish every opportunity to escape. A pickerel's mouth is tough, and you have to react quickly and drive the lure home with some force. I did neither. Nor did I maintain a tight line. The lure hung loosely in the fish's mouth, and when it shook its angry head, the lure flew across the water. Even though I had failed to react quickly and drive the hook home, the fish had hung itself, but I also failed to keep a tight line—and that was all the freedom the big chain needed.

A leaping fish is one of the greatest thrills in angling, but it is also a precarious moment. Anglers tend to freeze, to gaze at the spectacle, instead of giving their undivided attention to the position of their rod and a tight line. At no other point is a tight line more important. It is also a good idea to slap your rod tip toward the surface when the fish leaps. This tends to tighten the line and bring the fish back into the water were your chances of landing it are better.

I can't say that I enjoyed losing those trophy fish at various points in my angling career, but I treasure those moments. It's better to have tried and lost than not to have tried. Besides, I learned from the experiences. There have been other good fish that have not been so lucky as a consequence.

Mistakes are an important part of angling—so long as you profit from them. □



# Saving Mason Neck

Suggested uses for this Northern Virginia land included shopping centers and waste dumps but a new state park at Mason Neck saved this valuable resource.

by Gary Waugh, Jr.



Traditionally, spring is known as a time of growth and new direction. That tradition took on a special meaning this spring for the Virginia Division of Parks and Recreation. In April the division opened a new park in Fairfax County and dedicated another in nearby Prince William. Although the division manages 35 parks and natural areas located throughout the state, Mason Neck and Leesylvania are the first recreational state parks located in the suburban Northern Virginia area.

The opening of Mason Neck and the dedication of Leesylvania are the result of years of work by the division and a number of local forces. A spirit of cooperation was formed during those years that continues today. Private grass roots organizations, historical societies, and a number of public agencies, at one time or another, had a hand in the development plans for each park.

Mason Neck State Park is located on the peninsula of the same name in the southeastern corner of Fairfax County. Leesylvania, due to open in 1986, is located just across the Potomac River's Occoquan Bay in Prince William County. The proximity of the two parks leads to a number of similarities, particularly in flora and fauna. "Although they are both parks in areas of historical significance and are in the same area, we see them as parks with their own distinct personalities," said Ronald D. Sutton, Commissioner of the Division of Parks and Recreation.

#### *Mason Neck: A Cooperative Effort*

The approximately 10,000-acre peninsula of Mason Neck is named for the Mason family and its most famous son, George, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and author of the Virginia Bill of Rights. George Mason's home, Gunston Hall, is located on the Neck and open to the public.

In the mid-1960's differing groups started proposing a host of uses for Mason Neck. Some saw the Neck as part of an ideal route for an outer beltway around the Washington D.C. area. Others saw it as a site for pesticide testing, an inert landfill, an airport, or a planned community for 20,000 people. Still others believe a gas pipeline should be routed across the Neck.

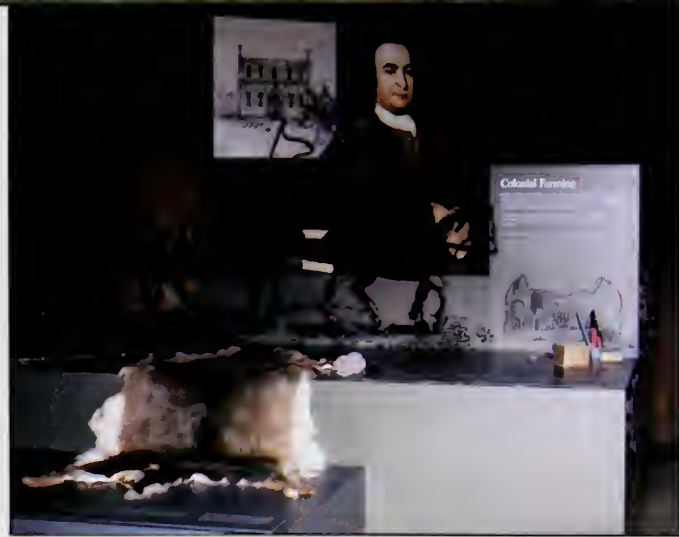
It was also during this time that the bald eagles on Mason Neck started gaining attention. This increased interest prompted a group of local citizens to band together in a grass roots effort to save the Neck. Today thanks to those friends of Mason Neck, over 5,300 acres are in the hands of regional, state and federal recreation or wildlife management agencies. This group of landowners consist of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority, the Gunston Hall Board of Regents, and the Virginia Division of Parks and Recreation.

As the newcomer to the area, the state park had to find its own niche. The Division of Parks and Recreation has done so with its passive recreation, day-use offerings at the park. Once at Mason Neck State Park, whether having a picnic overlooking Belmont Bay or birdwatching from the wooded trails, visitors feel they are years, rather than just minutes, away from the hustle of Northern Virginia.

Just up the road, Pohick Bay Regional Park offers golf, boating, camping, and a number of other active







(Page 3) This bridge at Mason Neck is a good wildlife watching platform. (Top) Hundreds of great blue herons nest at the Neck. (Above) One of the displays at the Mason Neck visitor center. (Left) There are active eagle roosts at Mason Neck and a nest on nearby park land.

photos courtesy of Division of Parks and Recreation

recreational opportunities. Adjoining the park, the National Wildlife Refuge emphasizes wildlife management, offering only limited access to the public. And, of course, there are the historical offerings at Gunston Hall. "Rather than compete with these groups, Mason Neck State Park completes the spectrum with its passive recreation offerings," added Warren Wahl, Superintendent of the park.

While much of the park will be left as a natural area, it does offer hiking, picnicking and environmental education opportunities. The modern Visitor Center overlooking Belmont Bay is the focal point of the park. Exhibits celebrate the spirit of cooperation between the public landowners on Mason Neck.

Gunston Hall, the Regional Park Authority, and the Fish and Wildlife Service are represented by displays in the center. Another involved agency, the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries is also represented.

Other visitor center displays interpret the park and surrounding environment, dealing with such diverse topics as colonial farming and the bald eagle. Some displays take the form of games to make environmental education fun for all ages. Many of these displays were purchased with monies from the Virginia Game Commission.

It is felt that the environmental education program at Mason Neck should develop into one of the strongest in the state. Access to an unspoiled natural area, combined with modern facilities and the number of schools and clubs in the area are the reasons for this optimism.

Some of the interpretive programming may also be a cooperative effort, this time with the Fish and Wildlife Service. An Environment Day, teaming interpreters from both the state parks and the wildlife service, is being planned, as is a series of walks to be conducted on both state park and wildlife refuge trails.

The natural setting is the main attraction of Mason Neck State Park. It features 2.5 miles of shoreline on Belmont and Occoquan Bays of the Potomac River. Fishing will be allowed from the banks of Belmont Bay. Over a mile of trails wind through oak, holly and laurel while providing panoramic views of the river. Trail bridges span swamp lands where fresh beaver cuttings can be seen.

In the spring, over a thousand great blue herons nest in a rookery on the Neck. These graceful birds are only one of many species that can be seen in the park. White-tail deer and beaver are among the mammals abundant in the park. Mink, muskrat and otter can also be found in the area.

However, it is the presence of the bald eagle that is the source of much excitement. A nest is located near the park on lands leased by the Fish and Wildlife Service. There is also an active winter roost on state park property used by as many as twelve eagles daily. The eagles are currently under study by several groups including the Fish and Wildlife Service. The eagle population on Mason Neck is also one of those in Virginia being studied with Non-Game funds from the Game Commission.

"The eagles at Mason Neck present us with a rare management opportunity," said Sutton. "The division must strike a balance between recreational offerings and protection for the eagles. We feel that the division and the park have the attributes to excel at both."





Roanne Woolard

*A plaque on this site was dedicated to the Lee family.*

Located 4.5 miles east of U.S. Route 1 off of Gunston Road, Mason Neck State Park is open year-round during daylight hours. The Visitor Center is open daily 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day and opened weekends and holidays through October. The picnic area and comfort station are open daily 8:00 a.m. to sunset through October.

### *Leesylvania: A Modern Park in a Historic Setting*

Those who attended the Leesylvania State Park dedication visited a park of historic significance and saw a park of potential. Plans call for Leesylvania to provide more active recreational outlets than its sister park at Mason Neck. Development is now underway for Phase I which will include a main access road, parking areas, plus launching facilities for sail boats and motorized boats. With three miles of shoreline surrounding the park on three sides, boating will be a major attraction at the park.

Further development will feature a swimming pool, picnic areas, expanded boating facilities, and a beach area with concessions. In addition, a large parcel of the park has been set aside for the construction of ballfields by the Prince William County Park Authority. This area will serve as a park within a park.

"After a study of the needs of the area, the division felt

the development of a more active recreational park was needed," said Sutton. "But of course Leesylvania is first and foremost a park of great historical significance."

Leesylvania is best known as the birthplace of "Light Horse" Harry Lee, Revolutionary War hero and father of General Robert E. Lee. The plantation was a part of the Lee family for 150 years. Henry Lee II and his wife, the parents of "Light Horse" Harry, are buried there. It is near this site that members of the Society of the Lees of Virginia had a plaque erected honoring the Lees and their history at Leesylvania. The plaque was dedicated as part of the April ceremony at the park.

The Lee family is only part of the history at Leesylvania. The prominent Fairfax family also had a home on the park property, and during the Civil War, gun emplacements were located on the bluffs overlooking the Potomac.

The hardwood and holly forest of the park will feature a network of historic interpretation trails. The trails will allow the visitor to view the gun emplacement sites, the Lee grave sites, and a number of ruins including those of the Lee house and Fairfax home.

"We are very excited about our move into this area of the state," said Sutton. "Both parks have the potential to be among the more popular day-use parks in the state system. We have a challenge to make our plans at these parks a reality, but it is a challenge with which the division is very comfortable." □



by Karen Terwilliger



Illustration by Cinde Brunner

# Are The *Big Silvers* Gone?

**The Game Commission, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy are working to restore the Delmarva fox squirrel to Virginia.**

“**T**he buffaloes are gone, and those who saw the buffaloes are gone” wrote Carl Sandburg in his poem *Buffalo Dusk*. The Delmarva fox squirrel is also gone, more so than the buffalo perhaps since the only Delmarva fox squirrels that remain are in a three county area of Maryland and in Accomack County, Virginia.

The big silver squirrels have been declining for a long time. Once found from central New Jersey to the Eastern Shore of Virginia, their range began to shrink around the turn of the century and by the early 1900's they were mostly gone from New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Virginia. In the 30's the Delaware population declined.

The Delmarva fox squirrel is gone from much of its former range and exists in Virginia only as a result of translocation from the Eastern Neck Wildlife Refuge in Maryland to Virginia's Chincoteague Refuge.

The squirrel's decline reflects changing land use patterns. As woodlands were cleared for agriculture and forestry, the fox squirrel's habitat diminished. The Delmarva prefers mixed stands of mature hardwood and loblolly pine with little or no understory. They were often found in such forests in close association with streams and agricultural fields. With time, the mature forests were either lost to agriculture or reforested. In the latter case, the forest grew back initially with a dense understory. By the time the forests succeeded to the open, park-like, mature stands which are ideal fox squirrel habitat, much of the land was again harvested.

Because of its specific habitat requirements, the Delmarva is thought to have had a scattered, discontinuous distribution throughout its former range. Its cousin, the gray squirrel, much less exacting in its requirements, almost always occurs with the Delmarva and is thought to possess a competitive edge over the larger squirrel in





*Feeders, like this one at Brownsville, provide a steady food source for the Delmarvas.*

Kathie Dixon

marginal habitats. The loss of preferred habitat in conjunction with competition from the much more adaptive, abundant gray squirrel, is thought to have caused the disappearance of this species from most of its original range.

The life history of the Delmarva is typical of fox squirrels. Fox squirrels have two litters per year, usually in February/March and again in July/August. Average litter size is three. After a 45-day gestation period, the young are born blind and naked and are weaned between nine and twelve weeks of age. Young fox squirrels are raised by the female in den trees or leaf nests when tree cavities are sparse.

Both the fox and gray squirrel seem to have the same food habits. Both species appear to eat mast (nuts and berries) in the fall and winter, relying on hardwood and conifer mast as well as crop remains in neighboring fields. During the spring and summer, they are more omnivorous, feeding on insects, buds and flowers, fungi, and an occasional egg or young bird.

While gray squirrels spend considerable time in trees, fox squirrels spend more time on the ground, often ranging out into open fields. This terrestrial nature might explain its adaptation to and occurrence in forests with little or no understory such as wood lots and streams and border belts.

A recovery team, established because of concern over the species' status, has developed and begun implementation of the Delmarva Peninsula Fox Squirrel Recovery Plan. This plan is designed to promote recovery of the squirrel by expanding existing populations through proper management and restoration of the squirrel to its former range. By restoring the fox squirrel to parts of its former range, its status might then be downgraded from endangered to threatened as a more secure condition is reached in the future. The recovery plan is comprehensive in scope and addresses limiting factors in the squirrel's life history in an attempt to provide the essentials for the squirrel's recovery. The plan includes:

Habitat protection.

Nest boxes or den tree provision.

Reduction of gray squirrel competition.

Protection from hunting and other mortality factors.

Habitat management for adequate food supply and understory reduction through planned forestry practices.

Translocation of squirrels to suitable habitat within former range.

Fox squirrels have been shown to respond positively to management and are not likely to be disturbed by moderate human activities in suitable habitats. These factors have encouraged the recovery team in Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, where management has begun.

In June 1982, a year-long transplanting effort began. Squirrels were taken from Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge to Brownsville, The Nature Conservancy property, with hopes of further extending the Delmarva's range on Virginia's Eastern Shore. The Virginia Game Commission, in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service staff from Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, successfully trapped and transplanted 24 squirrels to Brownsville's isolated, mature pine forests. The transplant was completed in July 1983. Nest boxes were erected and feeders installed in an attempt to meet all of the squirrels requirements.

Releases in Maryland and Chincoteague, Virginia, had shown that the squirrels are capable of dispersing well over a mile upon release. To circumvent this, the "soft release" technique that had proven useful in Maryland, was used. Squirrels were transported to their new release sites in their nest boxes and the boxes were placed in a large soft release cage (holding pen) where they were free to roam. Here they were monitored, fed and watered daily for about five days as they were given the chance to adapt to their new surroundings.

Since the transplant, feeder watches and nest box checks have been conducted to monitor the status of the population. Extra nest boxes and feeders were installed to insure that all the squirrels had access to food and shelter.





*Nest boxes are provided to give the squirrels a ready-made home.*

Karen Terwilliger

The observation of squirrels at feeding stations is one method of monitoring the squirrels throughout the year. Particularly valuable sightings were made during the winter months when the squirrels began to use the feeders as a regular source of food. Feeder watches provided valuable information on the general whereabouts and condition of the animals, but other methods were needed to better determine the population size and reproductive status of the squirrels.

The nest boxes had been erected in hopes the squirrels would utilize them for reproduction as well as winter denning. To date, however, observations have shown that only one Delmarva and several gray squirrels have used the boxes. Instead, it appears that the Delmarvas are using leaf nests for both nesting and winter protection. Adequate natural den tree sites have also been observed both at the release sites themselves, as well as in surrounding woods. This is very typical in suitable habitat. Although seasonal box checks have documented little squirrel use, a variety of birds have been using the boxes throughout the year, especially as winter roosts.

Since nest box checks revealed little about the population status of these animals, a more active form of monitoring was begun. In order to determine if reproduction was occurring, and to obtain an estimate of how many of the original two dozen squirrels remained on the release sites, a mark and recapture program was initiated. Forty live traps, baited with corn, were set and checked daily during January, 1984. After two full weeks of trapping, only four individuals were captured. Two of these animals were adult females which had been brought from Chincoteague during the initial transplant. The other two squirrels were young males, neither of which had been marked. This meant that either reproduction had occurred, or more likely, that one of the females was transplanted very early in pregnancy. During this trapping period, 16 gray squirrels were removed from the area in order to reduce any competition for food or nest sites.

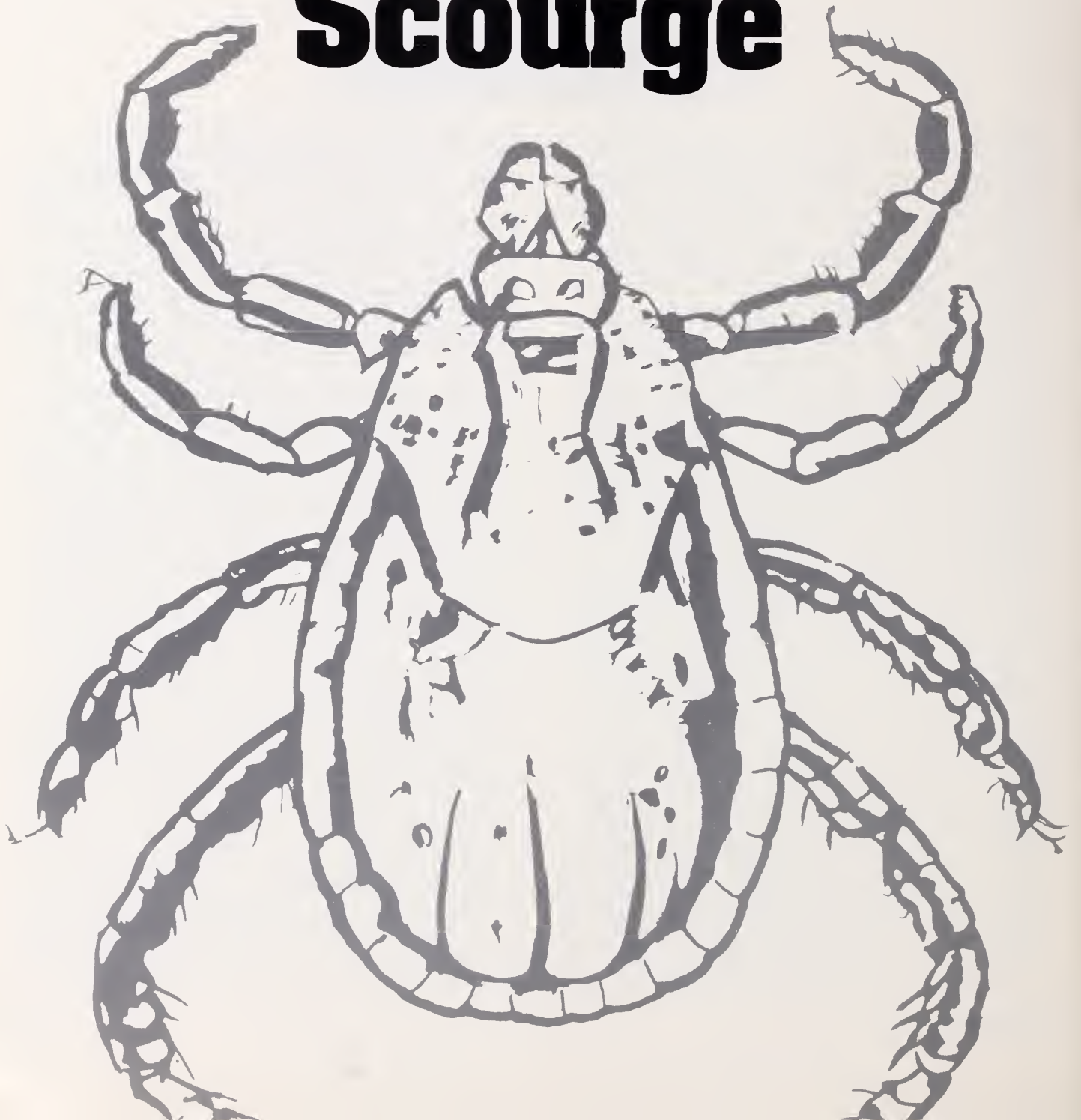
The low number of Delmarvas trapped could mean several things. First, that they have dispersed from the

area. This seems likely since squirrels have been reported from surrounding woods, although follow-up trappings in those areas failed to document their presence. Second, and less probable, is that the squirrels suffered a high mortality rate after their release. And third, that the squirrels escaped trapping for one reason or another, perhaps as a result of their dramatically reduced activity levels during cold weather. This past fall trapping was conducted when the squirrels were out searching for, and busy storing food for the winter. During the last three weeks of October, 40 live traps were placed at the release site, but not set, and baited with corn daily to attract the squirrels to the traps and get them accustomed to feeding next to the traps. Then the traps were set and checked daily during the first two weeks in November. Five Delmarva fox squirrels, five gray squirrels, and three opossums were caught. As in January, the gray squirrels were removed from the area and released. Two of the five Delmarva fox squirrels were adult males and one was an adult female. These squirrels were all in excellent condition. The female had moved from one pine hummock where it was trapped in January, 200 yards across a saltmarsh to a second hummock. Her teats had changed in color and size, indicating that she had indeed reproduced since the last trapping in January. The other two Delmarva fox squirrels were young of the year, probably born this summer. These two beautiful females, in excellent condition, offer a new generation, and a chance for continued survival of the fox squirrels in their new home. This brings the total number of Delmarva trapped in 1984 to eight individuals—gives us hope that reproduction will continue to occur.

Since we are dealing with such a small number of squirrels, we will have to be patient and continue monitoring. Time will tell if this species will take hold at its new release site. In the meantime, other suitable areas are being explored for possible future release sites. Perhaps, through these combined efforts, the Delmarva fox squirrel will be restored to its former range on Virginia's Eastern Shore. □



# **The Summer Scourge**





**by William Forgey and  
Jim Meuninck**

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**They're mean,  
nasty little  
critters, but with a  
little control, you  
won't have to let  
them get under  
your skin!**

**T**icks are small arthropods that attach to their victim by burrowing their head into the epidermis to suck blood. What makes their table manners more deplorable is their disgusting habit of infusing disease causing microorganisms into your body. The major infections caused by ticks are: Lyme Fever, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, Colorado Tick Fever, and Relapsing Fever.

The despair and discomfort from these diseases can be avoided by following these precautions: in tick country, especially in the spring and early summer when they are most active, wear long sleeved shirts with buttoned or snug fitting collars and sleeves; tuck your pants into your boots; a foreign legion type hat with a trailing cloth tail covering your neck is particularly useful; on the exposed parts of your body apply DEET (n,n, diethyl-m-toluidide) in a concentration of 30 percent or greater. At your sporting goods store you can buy DEET in concentration up to 100 percent; ticks often take several hours finding the best location before gnawing through the epidermis. By carefully examining each member of your party you can find the obnoxious vampires before they do harm. When possible, bathe or shower after a spring sortie in the woods. Shampoo your hair vigorously, and scrub your body.

There are several ways to back ticks out of their epidermal burrows. An application of alcohol, strong perfume or after shave lotion often works—better, a few drops of gasoline or kerosene. You can assist their removal by grabbing their head with some tweezers and gently twist them off. Do not crush the tick or leave the head buried in your skin. A crushed tick can spread contamination into your body through the punctured epidermis.

Lyme disease, carried by the diminutive deer tick, begins with chills, fever, nausea, headache and

swollen lymph glands. These symptoms are often confused with the flu. A circular rash will radiate out from the tick bite. In time the rash may cover the entire body. Lyme Fever, if untreated, can lead to arthritic pain that may last for years. A blood analysis will turn up the bacteria which must be destroyed with antibiotics.

Today there is a vaccine available to prevent Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. If you are traveling in the epidemic areas of North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, the Rocky Mountain states and Washington, your doctor may prescribe the vaccination.

Colorado Tick Fever is caused by a virus transmitted by wood ticks. The symptoms are similar to Lyme Disease: chills, fever headache and generalized aching. There is no vaccine. Recovery requires rest and aspirin. See your physician to be certain you have not contracted the more serious maladies: Lyme Fever or Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever.

Relapsing Fever has similar symptoms as the other tick transmitted diseases. Like Lyme Disease a rash appears. Nausea and vomiting are prevalent. This fever follows an attack-remission-attack-remission sequence. Treatment requires hospitalization and antibiotics.

Besides passing disease with an uncomfortable bite an unremoved tick, especially egg laden females, may induce paralysis. This disappears when the tick is removed.

Chiggers are the larvae of trombiculid mites. They generally attack around the waist or ankles while you are walking or working in berry patches, around shorelines, and along woodland edges. An excellent old prevention is an application of flowers of sulfur, available at some pharmacies. I have used this product in heavily infested areas. It works very well, with no smell or skin irritation. A DEET product of 30 percent also works. Once afflicted, apply a spot of seam sealant, finger nail polish or other airtight sealants to suffocate the larval mites. □



# The Lilies of Summer

*Often edible as well as beautiful,  
lilies are an important part of the woodland scene.*

story & paintings by Sharon Morris Kincheloe

"Consider the lilies, how they grow. . . King Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Luke 12:27. The graceful lily has not only long been admired for its beauty, but many species have been used for food and medicine.

The lily (*Liliaceae*) is one of the largest plant families and is extremely complex, it includes 4,000 to 6,000 species. Asparagus, sarsaparilla, leek, wild garlic and aloe are all related species.

An estimated 30 different lilies can be found in Virginia. Trilliums, Solomons' Seal, and wild Hyacinth are just a few of the spring lilies. There are lots of summer lilies, too, four of which are often confused because of the similar coloration. The nodding flowers of the Canada lily and Turk's-cap lily together with the upward-facing Day lily and Wood lily can be found in meadows, woodlands and roadsides.

Any lilies that might be gathered for food along a roadside could be unsuitable for eating. It is advisable to be sure the highway department has not done any herbicide spraying along the roadsides where the lilies might grow. □





## Wood Lily

The Wood Lily is the most infrequent of the four lilies illustrated. It can be found during June and July in the mountains of Virginia into West Virginia in relatively dry sites. The color varies from orange to scarlet. In the past, the bulbs of this plant were gathered for soup by the Indians.





## Canada Lily

The Canada Lily ranges in color from yellow to orange-red with dark spots. It grows in wet meadows and borders woodlands during June through August. The flower buds and roots were gathered and eaten by the Indians.



## Day Lily

Each flower of the Day Lily lasts only one day. Every part of the plant is edible. Some say the flower buds taste like green beans when cooked and served with butter. You'll find them along roadsides and in meadows during May through July.





110522 84

## Turk's-Cap Lily

The flower of the Turk's-Cap Lily resembles a cap worn by early Turks. At one time, 40 flowers were recorded on one plant. They grow in wet meadows and woods during July and August and have similar coloration to that of the Canada Lily.



# *Formula for Fish*

**Here's an easy fish recipe with  
a gourmet name and a taste to match.**

**by Helen Worth**

**D**oes the word gourmet intimidate you? It shouldn't. Because too many, in-name-only products, wear that label. For instance tasteless processed cheeses, gummy pâtes, and that obnoxious wonder—chocolate-covered ants.

The word is unnecessarily frightening, because often, what we may call gourmet—for instance, *Boeuf Bourguignon* (beef stew) is considered a peasant dish in France.

All too often, even a French recipe title strikes terror into the hearts of those who confidently know their way around a kitchen. And, interestingly, very often the French recipe will be closely related to one of our own standards.

An example is the recipe for lobster, *Homard Americaine*, sometimes called *Homard Armoricaïne*. (The differing title is due to a longtime culinary argument. Some historians say the sauce was named by a French chef to honor a group of visiting American guests; others insist it was the specialty of the province of Armorica, the original name of Brittany.)

Call it what you will, whether in French, or in plain old American, but realize that it is simply a variation of our own tried and true Barbecue Sauce. Know, too, that the tomato base makes it a kissin' cousin to New Orleans's much more complicated, Creole Sauce, and also of Italy's *Sauce Fra Diavolo*. In fact, every country, where toma-







toes flourish, takes advantage of that vegetables, excellence.

The richness of *Sauce Americaine* makes the dish a sort of economy because less fish can be used. But for best results, fillets should be cut about 1½-inches thick. In addition, the sauce is both spectacular and a perfect flavor contrast to seafood's blandness. As a useful addenda, realize that lobster, shrimp, and fish are interchangeable in recipes. No need to mention that a tomato-based sauce also can amicably companion chicken or pork.

Enter the Chinese, who admire giving food sly names. Their Shrimp with Lobster Sauce contains no lobster. It

simply is shrimp, combined with the same sauce used for Lobster Cantonese. So if you feel expansively epicurean, call the dish, Fillets with Lobster Sauce, instead of Fillets with Sauce Americaine.

The Barbecue Sauce is from my *Down-On-The-Farm Cookbook*—a lusty version that has become a tradition in my kitchen. No reason to restrict the sauce to summer even though, in those heated days, you probably will grill the fillets rather than baking them.

In either case, you will find the preliminary saltwater dip from a U.S. Department of Agriculture booklet on fish preparation, inestimable for enhancing your super-market catch.

*(Opposite page) Grilled fish fillets with barbecue sauce make a fine summer meal.*

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The following menu is for a company dinner with elegant airs. Substitutions for an informal dinner are included.

### *Menu*

*Salted Almonds*  
*Champagne*  
*Fillets in Lobster Sauce*  
*Buttered Rice*  
*Peas with Tarragon*  
*Green Salad with Croutons*  
*French Bread*  
*Fruit-of-the-Season Tarts*

To translate this menu into American, simply replace the almonds with pecans, serve Virginia's own Champagne, and enjoy a fruit pie for dessert. For another menu, when summer smiles, simply check the photo.

### *Fillets With Sauce Amercaine*

#### *Fish*

*4 fish fillets, weighing about ½-pound each*  
*¼ cup salt*  
*2 cups cold water*  
*4 tablespoons butter, melted*

#### *Sauce*

*1 clove garlic, diced*  
*¼ teaspoon dried thyme*  
*1 small piece bay leaf*  
*½ teaspoon salt*  
*1 small onion, diced*  
*1/16 teaspoon cayenne pepper*  
*1 can (10½ ounces) tomato puree*  
*¼ cup dry white wine, optional*

#### *Garnish*

*1 tablespoon parsley, chopped*

Preheat oven to very hot, 500°F. Dissolve salt in water,

dip fillets, then drain. Brush a low-sided baking pan with butter, and arrange drained fillets on it in a single layer. Pour remaining butter over fillets. Bake on top rack of oven until done, about 10 minutes and remove to warmed serving dish, retaining pan juices. For sauce, crush garlic, thyme and bay leaf with salt. Add to remaining ingredients, and boil gently until thick, about 25 minutes. Stir in reserved pan juices. Strain, heat and pour over baked fillets. Makes 4 servings.

### *Barbecue Sauce*

*1 cup tomato ketchup*  
*¾ cup water*  
*½ teaspoon salt*  
*¼ cup vinegar*  
*2 tablespoons sugar*  
*1 teaspoon dry mustard*

Combine ingredients and boil gently until thick, about 25 minutes. Season to taste. Makes 4 servings.



# GROUNDHOGS



William Lea

⊕ *Can Improve* ⊕  
*Your Deer Hunting*

*by Jack Randolph*

## *The hunting lessons provided by the common groundhog can make you a better big game hunter.*

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**I**t was a nip and tuck battle. I hadn't seen Tony for six months and at that time he was a head taller than I. All through our boyhood I had been the taller, but he suddenly started to sprout. But in the last six months my genes went into overdrive and I was growing like a weed myself. As I waited for the bus I hoped I was catching up.

As boys will, we engaged in friendly competition; wrestling, boxing and all sorts of sports and Tony usually came out ahead. However, in the years since I moved away from our old neighborhood along the seashore to a farming community 45 miles away, I had become more than a little proficient with my .22 rifle and I was confident that, at long last, I had found one thing I could best him with.

I was pleased to note, as he stepped off the bus, that I was gaining on him. I didn't know at the time that I would win that contest by almost a head. I couldn't wait for the following morning to take him to my favorite alfalfa field and its bountiful supply of groundhogs.

Before dawn we took off for the field which I knew had been recently cut with the bales still scattered about. It was perfect conditions for my style of hunting which required getting close to the target.

Dawn was just breaking as we carried bales to a spot I had selected for a blind. I knew the field well and located our blind near the center of the array of chuck holes.

As we sat back and waited, the single shot Marlin propped between us, I explained proper sight picture, how to hold high on long shots; all of

the sage advice I had accumulated in my 15 years.

Of course, over the years I learned that there are those who frown upon shooting chucks with a rimfire .22. As a matter of fact, at one time I returned to chuck hunting with a 22/250 and a spotting scope, but somehow it didn't have the same flavor as plinking at them with that old Marlin and the .22 long rifle hollow points.

It wasn't too long before a medium size wood chuck emerged from a nearby hole. At first it showed only its head and Tony was all for shooting it then and there. I explained that if we shot while the critter was still in the hole it might just fall back and we couldn't get it. I wanted the animal to claim my bounty from the farmer who gave me a quarter an animal and I wanted the carcass for several friends who held woodchuck on a par with rabbits for fine eating.

At long last the chuck edged away from the burrow and I handed the rifle to my friend. The distance was



**Woodchucks often climb trees, but generally choose something smaller than this one has.**

only 50 yards and, somewhat to my surprise, he killed it cleanly.

The next shot was mine. This was a larger animal about 75 yards away. As luck would have it, I missed the critter cleanly. For that matter I missed three more, while my buddy scored two out of the next three. Again he had the Indian sign on me. It seemed I couldn't beat him at anything. But the worse was still to come.

Every now and then, at about 150 yards, a huge chuck would poke his head up and then disappear. I declared that it was far out of range and we had better not waste a shot, perhaps spooking another that may come up closer. Just as we were about to leave, that chuck showed himself again and Tony wanted to try it.

"Ok," I said, "but you had better hold real high."

Following instructions, he held well over the animal and let one fly. To my surprise the chuck dropped. Hiking the distance to the burrow, there to my utter disgust was the chuck, as dead as dead can be, shot neatly between the eyes. I haven't seen Tony for forty years, but you can bet if we ever meet again I'll have to relive that humiliating day all over again.

The .22 has a way of teaching a chuck hunter humility, especially if you shoot with open sights as we did. But, a .22 is ideal for hunting the critters where you have to find them hidden along the hedgerows and in high grass. I remember when my son was initiated to the sport.



We were living on a farm in Prince George County. A great deal of the land was leased to a farmer who, despite the appetites of a great many deer and a few groundhogs, was struggling to bring off a soy bean crop. He told John that he would give him a half dollar for every groundhog he shot.

Armed with his contract and a .22 Browning lever action, the boy set out to make his fortune. It wasn't too long before he discovered that the little beasts spent more time learning to survive as groundhogs than he had learning to hunt them. He quickly set about trying to narrow the education gap.

The boy did a pretty good job of it. He learned the value of a low silent stalk along the edge of the woods where the shot was close or none at all. He also learned to guard a promising burrow until its occupants came out. There weren't enough ground hogs on the farm to make him rich, but he earned a few easy soft drinks that summer.

I noticed that chuck hunting helped him develop skills that would come in handy while hunting more wary game, particularly deer. In fact, that season, when he was 14, he bagged both of his deer with a 45 pound recurve bow during the first week of the bow season.

The little groundhog is a pest to farmers and an excellent target for riflemen, but if you really want to get full mileage out of a hog hunt and work on your hunting skills as well, haul out the .22 and go after them close up and personal. □

Pai Cooley

# They're the Pits

Virginia's deadly vipers use  
heat sensors to find their prey.

story & photos by John W. Mitchell

Timber Rattlesnake, *Crotalus horridus*







Copperhead, *Agkistrodon contortrix*

**G**reat horned owls, with their sensitive ears, can hear the squeak of a mouse about 100 yards away. Bouncing its high-pitched voice, the false vampire bat uses sound in the form of echoes to find mice upon which it feeds. We all know about the keen eyes and ears of bobcats, coyotes and many other kinds of predators: organs so sensitive they can detect the slightest movement or sound made by a rodent. But less familiar is the fact that some kinds of snakes, those belonging to the subfamily crotalinae for example, use heat to find and capture their prey. The pit vipers of the continental United States, rattlesnakes, copperheads



Cottonmouth, *Agkistrodon piscivorus*

and water moccasins, are common examples.

In pit vipers, a small heat-sensing organ is located between the eye and the nostril, one on each side of the serpent's head. Generally unnoticed or mistakenly thought to be a nostril, the sensor appears as a round or slightly oblong opening. Within are two small, air-filled chambers separated by a thin membrane. This membrane appears to be the main part of the organ. It contains an elaborately branched nerve and this accounts for the sensor's extreme sensitivity. Snakes in studies responded within one thirty-five thousandth of a second to an amount of heat so small it could not be felt by the human hand.

Because of the eye-like location of the sensors, scientists believe that, by shifting its head, the serpent can even distinguish the direction in which its prey faces. Based on present knowledge, it appears that the serpent monitors heat differential from one side of the head to the other. This supplies the animals with continuous reports on an enemy's whereabouts, an obvious advantage when confronted with danger in darkness.

Snakes function best when their body temperature remains within a rather narrow range. For example, the sidewinder rattlesnake is reported to maintain its temperature within a range of about two degrees Fahrenheit. To do this, the snake must seek an environment that will afford the right body temperature. The heat sensors may enable the serpent to scan its surroundings and locate an environment suited to this purpose.

Heat sensors complement the snake's eyes. They extend the scope of its senses. With them, the search for warm-blooded prey continues after sundown. Without them, some mice and other rodents would spend the night more safely. □





# Bird of the Month

## The Spotted Sandpiper

We had spent an unproductive day on the Staunton River as far as fishing was concerned. The striped bass were simply not being cooperative during daylight hours. It was nearing sunset as we sped toward Brookneal Landing. We flushed a pair of little birds from the woody debris of logs and branches along the river's muddy edge. They flew ahead of us with rapid, but stiff and shallow, fluttering wing beats uttering a series of calls sounding like "peet-weet, peet-weet," repeated a number of times.

Most Virginia sportsmen are familiar with the spotted sandpiper even though they may not have known it when they saw it. It is probably the most common of our inland sandpipers, inhabiting just about any body of freshwater from small ponds and streams to large rivers and reservoirs. Occasionally it may be found in the uplands around swales and ditches. It is commonly found in picturesque mountain valleys that run through pasturelands and on our big reservoirs such as Buggs Island and Smith Mountain. It seems that just about every few acres of water has a pair of spotted sandpipers in the same manner that every couple houses in the city have their mockingbirds!

It is often called sand lark, peep, sand peep, peet-weet, seesaw, tilt-up and teeter-tail. Measuring about seven to eight inches in length, it is the only sandpiper with a spotted breast, the others being streaked. During the fall and winter, however, these spots are lost and its breast is plain white. Its back is an ashy-olive or olive-brown, and it has a white stripe over its eye. In flight it shows a white line the length of its wings. A good field mark in fall is a white patch on the side of its upper breast near the shoulder.

Its best identifying mark is its habit of constantly "bobbing" or "teetering" its tail up and down as it stands or walks across logs, rocks, muddy shores or sandy beaches. It stands with body tilted forward with tail high. One unusual trait of the spotted sandpiper is its ability to perch on twigs or wires which most other shorebirds can't or won't do. Its outer and middle toes are partially webbed and it is capable of swimming on or under water. Some say it can walk for short distances under water. The young are good swimmers as well. When flushed from shore, they usually fly out over the water, following a semi-circular flight path, to alight again farther down shore.

Little teeter-tails feed on all types of animal matter including crustacea and small fish, to grasshoppers and other terrestrial insects. I recall scaring off two birds from a rocky lake shore. They apparently were feeding on fairy shrimp and plankton, for I saw thousands of the little creatures being washed by waves into little pools behind the rocks along the shore. They struggled and wiggled about, arching their bodies back and forth. Then a new wave washed a new group of them in and some of the others back into open water. The two sandpipers were having a fine feast when I interrupted them.

Spotted sandpipers breed in most of the United States and far into northern Canada. They begin arriving here in late March or early April. By May, the little hen has picked out a nesting site, which may be in the open, hidden in a clump of vegetation; under a shrub; near a log or rock; or along a lake or river bank. Some sites are chosen close to water while others are a considerable distance away. The nest is merely a depression in the

ground lined with grasses or weeds. Four eggs constitute a normal clutch and they are buffy in color, spotted and blotched with browns. The female is referred to as a "close siter," preferring to sit on the nest until the last possible moment if disturbed. Unlike many other shorebirds, she will not try to lead intruders away by feigning injury. When startled she jumps up and runs about nervously.

With the coming of fall, they lose their spotted breast as they go through molt. Duck hunters frequently come in contact with little teeter-tail while scouting in preparation for the upcoming hunting season. It's been my experience that I seldom see a spotted sandpiper in Virginia after the third week in October, with the majority of them apparently migrating through early in October. Spotted sandpipers winter from Bermuda, South Carolina, the Gulf States and southern British Columbia, all the way to southern Brazil, Bolivia and Peru. □

by Carl "Spike" Knuth



# -June Journal-

## Watchable Wildlife Areas to Open

Two new Watchable Wildlife areas are to be opened this year through the efforts of the Non-Game Wildlife and Endangered Species Program as part of public outreach. Two areas, one in Charlottesville and the other in Chesterfield County will be open for use by the general public.

At Points of Rocks Park in Chesterfield County, a combination of a wildlife food plot and fruit bearing shrubs will bring an assortment of wildlife, especially songbirds within easy viewing of a bird blind placed near the plantings. This area is scheduled for opening in mid September. An accompanying brochure will aid the observer in identifying plants he

or she may want to add to their property for attracting wildlife.

Ivy Creek Natural Area in Charlottesville also received assistance from the Non-Game Program. An assortment of plants that provide food for wildlife were added to this unique natural area. In addition, supplementary field and education equipment was purchased to aid in Ivy Creek's many environmental education programs. A brochure to identify points of interest along the nature trail is also available to visitors.

In a continuing effort by the Non-Game Program several other watchable wildlife areas throughout the state are scheduled for construction

next year.

Two other areas previously developed on Commission owned property, Ragged Island Watchable Wildlife Area in Isle of Wight County and Backyard on Broad, a demonstration backyard habitat at the Commission office in Richmond opened two years ago. Both have received visitors from around the state interested in viewing unique habitat types and the varied wildlife found in their habitats.

Information and pamphlets on these areas is available by writing to the Non-Game Wildlife and Endangered Species Program, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, Virginia 23230-1104. □

by Susan Gilley



# Summit Vacations Offer "Peak Experiences"

Thinking of summer vacations?

An exciting vacation in majestic mountains and deep green forests awaits adults and families who seek a unique outdoor experience. People of all ages can discover the adventure and wonder of the out-of-doors through field trips, workshops, demonstrations and outdoor activities at the National Wildlife Federation's Blue Ridge Summit Vacation in Black Mountain, North Carolina, from June 22-28.

The National Wildlife Federation has conducted Summit Vacations for 15 years. Through a unique combination of recreation and education, the Summit allows participants to tailor their schedules to suit their own needs and interests. The choices for adults range from ecology walks, to native culture, to an exciting tour along the beautiful Blue Ridge Parkway.

While adults are busy with their activities, teens enjoy the challenge of backpacking, hiking and group cooperation activities as they explore the beauty of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Younger children enjoy adventure, hiking, nature study, games and arts and crafts during the day.

In the evening, families get together for an energetic country square dance, an in-depth seminar on environmental issues, or quiet relaxation.

All programs are led by experienced, skilled leaders. Among them, George Reiger, noted author and conservation editor for *Field and Stream* magazine, will lead sessions on current conflicts and conservation history. Dr. Phyllis S. Busch, naturalist and author of 15 books, will lead Summiteers on nature hikes and introduce them to the wonders of the natural world.

Meals and lodging are provided by the YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly. A family of four can enjoy a week's stay for between \$605.50 and \$757.30. A program fee of \$160.90 per adult and \$80.00 per child or teen entitles participants to attend all programs throughout the week. Summiteers also have access to the YMCA recreation facilities.

In addition to the spectacular Blue Ridge Mountain location, the Federation is sponsoring Summits this year in Estes Park, Colorado, June 30-July 6, and in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, a coastal site, August 4-10.

For more information, write: Summit Vacations, Dept. BNR, National Wildlife Federation, Washington, D.C. 20036, or call 703/790-4363. □



*Members of the Coast Guard, Coast Guard Auxiliary, the U.S. Power Squadron and representatives from the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries look on as Governor Charles S. Robb signs the Certificate of Recognition for National Safe Boating Week and Courtesy Marine Examination Month. National Safe Boating Week will be from June 2-8, 1985. Courtesy Marine Examination Month is from May 15 to June 15, 1985.*



# -June Journal

## The Frontier: A Tradition and an Ethic

It's a debatable point but the white-tail deer generally is considered Virginia's most important game animal, although more people may hunt squirrels than hunt deer. In colonial times the deer was the first native wild species important enough to the colonists, and hunted heavily enough by them, to cause to be enacted a law protecting them from hunting during a portion of each year.

The first Virginia colonists were not agriculturists or husbanders. They came initially as explorers, finders, gatherers, living off the land. After about 90 years or so, the number of deer available to be "gathered," in the vicinity of settlements, seemed to have diminished. Old timers could reminisce with nostalgia about the "the good old days," as old timers of all ages were, and still are, wont to do. In 1699 the Grand Assembly enacted a law forbidding taking a deer between the first day of February of each year and the last day of July. In 1705 the closed season was extended by two months, to run from January 1 to August 31. Then in 1734 the Colony got its first "buck law," which did not prohibit killing antlerless deer but did prescribe separate, overlapping open seasons for taking bucks (August 1 through November 30) and for taking does and fawns (October 1 through December 31).

Frontiersmen, however, were not expected to be governed by these earliest hunting laws. And thereby

hangs an American tradition, of a kind.

When Virginia declared herself a free and independent state, existing colonial statutes were deemed void and the state set about enacting a new code of laws. Game and fish laws did not take high priority. It was 1801 before the Commonwealth of Virginia got around to setting by state law essentially the same open and closed deer hunting seasons that colonial authorities had settled upon almost exactly a century before, treating both bucks and antlerless deer alike.

Separate deer seasons east and west of the Blue Ridge were an 1849 innovation, with open seasons September 1 through the following January 31 in the east and August 1 through December 31 in the west. Frontiersmen still enjoyed exemption, although the frontier was acknowledged to have receded westward. Closed seasons west of the Blue Ridge applied only east of the Alleghenies.

In the exultation of annually reenacting for recreation the ancient tribal art of hunting for subsistence, a frontier tradition, it has been all too easy for some hunters in each succeeding generation to incorporate in the tradition a frontier ethic permitting disregard of constraints imposed by laws enacted by and for the people of the settlements. As far as strict obedience to game and fish laws is concerned, there still seem to be "frontiersmen" all over the place but no frontier. □

by Jim McInteer

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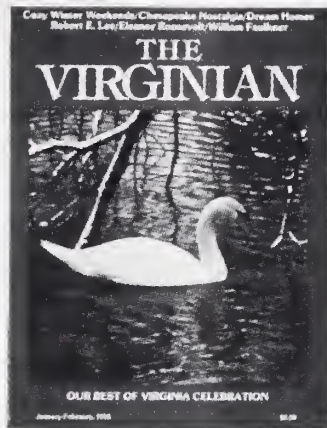
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## About the Authors

**Bob Gooch** is a newspaper columnist and contributor to outdoor magazines. From his base in Troy, Bob has fished many of the world's best waters. **Gary Waugh** writes about Virginia's new parks from his vantage point as Chief Administrative Intern for the Virginia Division of Parks and Recreation. **Karen Terwilliger** is a game biologist based on the Eastern Shore. **Sharon Morris Kincheloe** painted lilies for us from her home in Millboro. **Helen Worth** is from Ivy, and is involved in culinary instruction as well as writing. **Jack Randolph** is an avid hunter and fisherman as well as assistant director of the Virginia Game Commission. **William Forgey** and **Jim Meuninck** team up to write about sports medicine and first aid. □



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